VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2013 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
DEED / FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

SESSION NOTES:

Committee Objective

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis

2013 Community Partner Members (listed alphabetically): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Mike Harper, Dan Meyers, Julie Peterschick, Rachel Praught, Lori Sterner/Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Sara Sundeen, and Leslie Swartling

VRS Members: Becky Johnson, Peg Killen, Chris McVey, Roland Root, Dee Torgerson,

and Jeri Werner

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

Co-leaders: Chris McVey, David Sherwood-Gabrielson and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2013 Schedule: Jan 25, Feb 22, Apr 26, Jun 28, Sep 27, Oct 25, and Dec 6.

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October 25, 2013 Session Objectives:

- ★ Provide an overview of VR Order of Selection and gather committee input on the impacts of the waiting list on the Minnesota VR Community
- * Facilitate the sharing of relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers

October 2013 Attendees (*listed alphabetically*): Becky Bazzarre, Laura Bealey, Gil Bessard, Steve Brink, Heather Deutschlaender, Mike Harper, Amanda Jensen-Stahl, Becky Johnson, Peg Killen, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Kim Peck, Roland Root, David Sherwood-Gabrielson, Sara Sundeen, Leslie Swartling, Jan Thompson, Dee Torgerson and Jeri Werner

Not in attendance: Julie Peterschick and Rachel Praught

Guest presenter: Jeff Bangsberg

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

Agenda Topics:

- * Welcome / Overview
- ★ Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
- ★ Advisory Perspectives: Subminimum Wage and Section 511
 - Guest: Jeff Bangsberg, Employment Committee Chair for the MN Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD)
- * Strategic Dialogue: VR Order of Selection and the Current Waitlist Situation
 - Guest: Terry Sands, VRS Director of Program Evaluation
- ★ Wrap Up/Adjourn

Meeting Highlights:

- The committee discussed perspectives on Subminimum Wage and Section 511 topics such as 'commensurate wage' as it relates to the full range of VR services spanning center based employment to community based employment settings.
- The committee discussed RSA regulations surrounding Order of Selection and the current waitlist for Service Priority Categories Two and Three in Minnesota

Next Steps:

- **DOCUMENT SESSION NOTES:** Documentation and communication of session notes for key audiences including committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- 2014 CRP ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPLICATIONS:
 - VRS will solicit the full CRP community for 2014 membership openings via email in the near future.
- **DECEMBER VR COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY -** Laura Bealey will provide the December story.
- NEXT MEETING: Final 2013 meeting is Friday, December 6th.

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Welcome and Opening

The committee approved the September 27th session notes.

Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

CRP updates:

- Steve Brink
 - Tran\$Em will be 100% IPS service model by year end.
 - Starting up a new IPS grant.
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
 - Goodwill Easter Seals is exploring IPS
- Laura Bealey
 - MRCI Mankato has promoted Laura Bealey to Chief Operating Officer. The new role includes intense learning around 245D rate conversions.
 - New candy contracts in Holiday and Target stores are keeping them busy
- Leslie Swartling
 - WORC is hosting their first annual 5k Stroll and Roll race in Winona on November 8th
 - Leslie is also deeply immersed in learning the 245D rate conversions.
 - Continuing work on IPS.
- Heather Deutschlaender
 - ProAct is finding it a slower go with Walgreens REDI program in new stores;
 they are working with corporate to address issues.
 - They have added staff for job coaching and job readiness. and adding three staff to support
- Dan Meyers
 - Opportunity Partners currently have Walgreens REDI programs in two stores and have had five job placements.
 - They have added two staff focused on DISCOVERY in Dakota county
 - Dan shared that 'ReelAbilities' will highlight disabilities films on November 1-5 at St Anthony Main
- Gil Bessard
 - Tasks Unlimited will be unveiling a new logo and tagline
 - Completed Charities Review Council rating process
 - Major efforts include changes to IT and database
- Becky Bazarre
 - Lifetrack Resources had a goal of 101 placements and has already hit 141 placements including 14 placements with IPS in partnership with Canvas Health

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❖ DEED/VRS updates:

- Kim Peck: Congress is still working on resolving the budget. While VRS was able to leverage the state appropriation to bridge the gap in the short term, the next rounds of sequestration cuts are anticipated in January 2014. Federal funds provide 80% of VRS funding so additional cuts will have deep impacts. State Director Kim Peck is continuing dialogue with DEED department leadership about slowing down spending due to sequestration/government shutdown. She will be discussing more about the role of order of selection this afternoon.
- The 2013 federal fiscal year (FFY) concluded 9/30/13. Kim shared that VRS met or exceeded all federal standards and indicators with the exception of average minimum wage. The calculation for this 'average' is challenging due to a number of variables. According to the calculation formula, the Minnesota average minimum wage is expected to be \$24.80. With Minnesota's consumer population including approximately 40% transition youth as well as a number of consumers falling within the Most Significant Disabilities categories, VRS frequently struggles with this performance standard and currently has an actual average minimum wage of \$11.07 per hour. Advisory members said this average is in line with what they see within their respective organizations. VRS Field Director Jan Thompson shared the news that the statewide outcomes goal of 2,490 was exceeded a wonderful 2,738 employment outcomes were achieved this year in comparison to last year's 2,477. Kim and Jan thanked staff and partners for making it possible to serve this number of people across the state.
- The Governor appointed subcabinet commissioned to develop Minnesota's Olmstead Plan met and approved a draft plan on October 22nd to be submitted next Thursday. VRS has predominantly contributed to the chapter focused on Employment for VRS which addresses expansion of integrated employment, and services for transition youth and adults.
 - The first component of the plan is to develop solid baselines for the establishment of goals.
 - The second component of the plan will focus on creating strategic goals to align strategies and funding for better cross-agency collaboration. This includes work on common definitions, policies, and interagency funding streams alignment work for more integrated setting. Minnesota will adopt an 'employment first' policy.
 - The third component is to provide training, technical assistance and outreach on employment in the most integrated setting. One of the biggest training objectives will be to positively affect attitudes and perceptions that contribute to current barriers and prevent people with disabilities from securing employment in the most integrated settings. This type of shift will require significant outreach to communities and families throughout Minnesota.
- The 2013 Minnesota Olmstead Plan is now posted online. You can find the Olmstead Plan (along with other resources, such as notes from subcabinet

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meetings and drafts of the plan) on Minnesota's Olmstead Plan website: http://bit.ly/19AoLdc. To provide feedback, use the contact form on the Minnesota Olmstead Plan website (http://bit.ly/14fcGSL) or send an email to opc.public@state.mn.us>.

Here's the link to the home page for Minnesota's Olmstead Plan: http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?ldcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVER_SION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=opc_home
If you click the tab at the top for "DOCUMENTS" you'll see all the documents that have been posted on Olmstead. The October 8th DRAFT is the most recent document posted on the site - this draft has most of the essential content. A final draft will be presented to the Court (deadline 11/1/13).

* Committee member Steve Brink provided the October community partnership success story:

- The story began in 2005 when Steve first met a gentleman who was in a tough situation. He had attempted suicide several times. He was a truck driver but he didn't want to do that anymore. With help from Steve and others, the client found a new job cleaning a building that lasted for a few years and then a reoccurrence of his depression hit.
- So with Steve's encouragement he met with VR who sent him to training and got his license up to date. He decided to go back into truck driving and now eight years later in 2013, he's in a far better place in his life: he's been stable with far fewer visits to doctor, he has a new home, a new truck, and he's moving toward going off SSDI.
- Steve credits the dedicated alliance of collaboration among medical, CRP, and VRS partners working together with the client. Steve says while his client is continuing to receive long term supports, Steve and his staff don't see much of this client anymore - and they couldn't be happier for him!

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Advisory Perspectives: Subminimum Wage and Section 511

VRS Director Kim Peck introduced advisory guest, Jeff Bangsberg to the committee. Jeff is currently the Employment Committee Chair for the MN Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) and has previously served two terms on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Jeff recently joined Kim on Capitol Hill to meet with the Senate Health Committee as both a former SRC Chair and VRS consumer. Kim invited Jeff to meet with the VRS CRP Advisory to discuss and gain committee perspectives on current program realities regarding subminimum wage and Section 511 legislation.

Jeff shared his observations around the conversations that are being held on topics such as 'commensurate wage' as it relates to center based employment and community employment settings. While many acknowledge the need for a full range of employment opportunities, there is a keen interest in how subminimum wage and/or commensurate wage impacts individuals participating in DT & H services. The advisory committee discussed the complexity of understanding the broad range of people who are served; creating informed choice options wherever possible, and helping communities understand employment and community integration.

Kim reminded the advisory committee that VRS is responsible for assessing whether people can benefit from services or not and that waiver funds are a source of last resort. VRS is required to perform due diligence and that can involve significant resources. This can sometimes imply a false choice of either receiving VR services or not which does not necessarily reflect many individuals' situations. The emerging Olmstead Plan may facilitate a role to assist with better interagency connecting and aligning of resources for employment services.

Another prominent issue emerges with fulfilling retiring Senator Harkin's strong advocacy for people with disabilities as it relates to trends of youth being tracked into sheltered workshops. The Senate defines transition age youth as those 14-22 years of age. Currently for anyone to be placed in a facility based employment program, VRS must be at the table and have completed a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility for services or render an assessment that the individual is unable to benefit from services. Proposed federal legislation moves this level of intense involvement from expectation to mandate. Given the population of transition youth, and without any additional funding, that determination could potentially result in all/most current VRS resources being consumed simply to fulfill that requirement. In light of these concerns, the public Vocational Rehabilitation program has come out against such a mandate unless it also addresses funding and alignment issues caused by reimbursements etc.

CRP perspectives on the topic included:

There was general consensus among advisory CRP members that if subminimum wage is eliminated and/or if the minimum wage is increased, it would likely negatively impact their business. Even organizations without any DT & H services would be impacted due to increased VR resources going into eligibility assessments resulting in fewer funds for referred services. Extended Employment (EE) dollars would

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become even more important due to the increased need for resources to provide long term supports.

- Subminimum/commensurate wages has been overly shadowed by the negative lowa media story. Many organizations are working hard to help those who want to move from center-based to community-based setting however providers have seen the level of resistance from family and support systems for consumers often highly correlated with the length of time consumers have been in a center based setting. It is typically easier to assist consumers into community based settings initially then it is to move existing consumers from center-based to community-based settings.
- MRCI, ProAct and RISE are among those who offer the full spectrum of services. They believe a broad array of services can help to better meet the wide range of consumer needs. There are still many areas in our state where the services array just aren't there. Advisory members agreed that movement toward fuller integration of employment and community requires a sustained, long term direction and effort. It will continue to be a topic of strategic and tactical planning and implementation for the foreseeable future.

Jeff Bangsberg thanked the committee for their perspectives and provided his contact information for continued access to updates on the subminimum wage and Section 511.

Strategic Dialogue: VR Order of Selection and the Current Waitlist Situation

The afternoon session was focused on discussion of the VR Order of Selection and the current waitlist situation in Minnesota.

Advisory Committee Members were joined by VRS Director of Program Evaluation Terry Sands who provided the committee with an overview of historical data and a review of trends associated with the federal VR Order of Selection regulations. Terry reviewed supporting materials which included the following:

- (a) Order of Selection and Service Priorities Categories handout
- (b) FFY 2013 CFP Authorization Summary and information on case service expenditures

As part of contextual remarks, Director Kim Peck explained that the VR Order of Selection was established by Congress to ensure that if resources were limited that the priority would be to serve those with the most significant disabilities associated with the higher Service Priority Categories first. It was also developed to ensure that resources would continue to be available until someone is successfully employed. This requires that VRS must plan and budget accordingly to fulfill approved service contracts. Resources are the biggest constraints in serving people with disabilities in Minnesota. Over 150,000 people that are estimated to have eligible needs and currently VRS is serving approximately 20,000.

The Order of Selection was developed in the mid 1990's and is composed of four tiers of priority. Priority Category One is the highest priority for service and Priority Category Four is the lowest priority served by VR. Category Four was closed in 1998 and has

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remained closed ever since. In Q4 2002, due to funding constraints VR closed Categories Two and Three. Category One was then closed in 2004 and reopened in 2005. As of October 14, 2013, VRS is once again facing severe funding constraints that have prompted the closure of Categories Two and Three with only Category One open. Currently, approximately 65% of VRS consumers are eligible for Category One services, 25% are eligible for Category Two and 10% and Category Three. Category Four remains closed. Categories Two and Three with applications dated before October 14th will continue to be served. Those with determined eligibility of other than Category One on or after October 14th are currently put on a waiting list while Categories Two and Three are closed and will be contacted based upon application date if /when categories are reopened.

DEED and VRS staff feels a great deal of trepidation and sadness with the closing categories because nobody wants to deny services to anybody. There has been extensive work by the VRS Leadership Team in collaboration with DEED leadership to understand how the valves and gates work given the fiscal projections. Everyone acknowledges the impacts to people and partners with the closure of any service category however to some degree we are better equipped to manage through this current round of fiscal shortage given VRS and many of the community partners have been through a similar situation before. We will continue to manage services to the best of our abilities within the fiscal and political realities that impact our consumers and staff.

Next the advisory discussed some of the complexities related to determining service priority categories and strategies to assist waitlisted consumers. In concluding the afternoon session, Kim thanked the committee for their input and for their work with both current and waitlisted consumers during the current fiscal challenges. She promised to continue to keep the community partners apprised of any new developments and thanked them for their commitment and support.

For more information on VR Order of Selection:

http://mn.gov/mnddc/parallels2/four/rehab_act/RSA_Fact_Sheet-Order_of_Selection.pdf

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KEY MESSAGES FROM TODAY

Important Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- FFY2013 was a great year for the greater vocational rehabilitation community when it came to employment outcomes with our consumers. Over 2,730 VRS consumers secured competitive employment!
- Minnesota's network of services and service providers provide a wide array of options to serve the broad and increasing needs of Minnesotans with disabilities ranging from center based to community based services. VRS is responsible for determining eligibility for services which includes a presumption in favor of finding and securing competitive employment wherever deemed possible. This level of eligibility assessment and due diligence can be very resource intensive.
- The committee believes that current efforts to eliminate the subminimum wage and commensurate wage work options have the potential to significantly weaken Minnesota's climate for employment and community integration for people with disabilities. The committee will continue to monitor and assess potential impacts related to proposed legislation connected to subminimum wage and Section 511.
- Order of Selection is required by RSA and provides a framework of four tiers of service priorities. Due to federal funding sequestration, Minnesota has closed service priority categories two and three effective October 14, 2013, with only the highest priority category one remaining open until funding issues are addressed. Consumers should still be encouraged to complete applications with clear communication that if/when waitlists are suspended; applications will be reconsidered and activated based on date applied.